

# Air Education and Training Command

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**U.S. AIR FORCE**

## On Scene Commander's Course Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM)

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# Objective



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To comprehend the elements and processes of Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) as a resource for the on scene commander.



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# Overview



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- CISM Defined
- CISM Team and Chaplain Service Personnel
- The Nature of Critical Incident and Stress
- The Crisis Sequence
- The Three D's of CISM

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# References



*Develop America's Airmen Today ... for Tomorrow*

- AFI 44-153, *Critical Incident Stress Management*
- More information is available from the *International Critical Incident Stress Foundation* at [www.icisf.org](http://www.icisf.org)





# CISM Defined



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- Critical Incident Stress Management (CISM) is a Comprehensive Approach to Traumatic Stress Management
- CISM is not part of safety investigation board – it is an educational and prevention tool for the commander (AFI 44-153.2.1.6.3)

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# CISM Defined



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- AFI 44-153, p.2.1.6, mandates CISM for all Class A mishaps and recommends it for other traumatic events and after a series of smaller traumatic events
- CISM accentuates the Air Force's commitment to personnel and the goal of maintaining a fully functional force even during and after catastrophic circumstances.





# CISM Defined



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- CISM includes programs such as...
  - Pre-Incident Education and Pre-exposure Preparation (PEP) for First Responders
  - Three Step Intervention Program during/after a Critical Incident Response
    - Demobilization (at or near scene)
    - Defusing (at conclusion of event)
    - Debriefing (24-78 hours after the conclusion of the event)



# CISM Team



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- AFI 44-153, p.2.1.1, ensures establishment of at least one CISM Team to address local needs
- The CISM Team is multidisciplinary and includes
  - Mental Health/Life Skills
  - Medical
  - Spiritual Support (Chaplain or Chaplain Assistant)
  - Peer Representative
  - Family Support





# Why Chaplain Service Personnel



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- People - our most important resource
- Demand - commanders and first sergeants
- Ministry of Presence - presence of the Holy in a myriad of “unholy”
- Known - unique opportunity to interact with people across the life cycle
- Benefits - reestablishes hope, healing, trust, community
- Goal - restore fully functional people and teams
- How? Next slide





# Chaplain Goals of CISM



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- Promote spiritual health and well-being of victim, survivor, and responder
- Mitigate critical incident stress impact on life function
- Empower through acceptance/use of available resources
- Assist in the return to effective coping skills
- Educate and celebrate; counsel and console
- Prevent loss of hope, trust, and sense of community

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# Nature of a Critical Incident

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- Crisis Event
- Sudden, powerful turning point
- Outside normal range of human experience
- Emotionally significant
- Often produces intense reactions (i.e. fear, terror, or helplessness)





# Critical Incident Stress



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- Also called “Traumatic Stress”
- Characterized by physical and psychological arousal, or hypersensitivity, arising as a direct result of an exposure to the demand or pressure from a critical incident.
- May result in Post Traumatic Stress Disorder (PTSD) if left untreated





# Traumatic Stress Impacts

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- Cognitive: What a person is thinking
- Emotional/Psychological: What a person is feeling
- Physical: What the body is doing
- Behavioral/Relational: What a person is doing
- Spiritual: What a person is believing



# Crisis Sequence



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- Pre-crisis, Pre-Event
- Event
- Impact
- Resolution, Post-Event

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# Pre-Crisis and Chaplain



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- Life is “normal” - time for training and preparation
- Chaplain’s role and goal
  - **P**re-Vention – Pre-exposure preparation
  - **E**nter-Vention – On scene support
  - **P**ost-Vention – follow-up Care
- “Pre-Exposure Preparation (PEP) is provided by the CISM Team...when exposure to potentially traumatic events is expected.”  
(AFI 44-153, p.3.2)

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- PEP is Educational in form of Counseling,





# Pre-Exposure Preparation

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- A preventative approach to help individuals prepare for and cope with potentially traumatic events (AFI 44-153, p.3.1)
- Emphasizes normalcy of feeling stress in abnormal situations
- Three-step process: recognize feelings, know and practice positive stress behaviors, and avoid sources of ineffective coping
  - PEP Handout -
  - Ready for Scenario? -





# Event



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**PRECRISIS**

**PLANE CRASH**

**X**

**DEFINE THE EVENT  
EXPECTATIONS  
REFERRALS**

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# Impact



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**PRECRISIS**

**PLANE CRASH**

**IMPACT**

- Primary Victim
- Secondary Victim
- Tertiary Victim

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# Victims



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- Primary victims -- those directly traumatized by the event
- Secondary victims -- those who witnessed or managed the event
- Tertiary victims -- those to whom the event may be directly communicated or who may have something in common with the victims

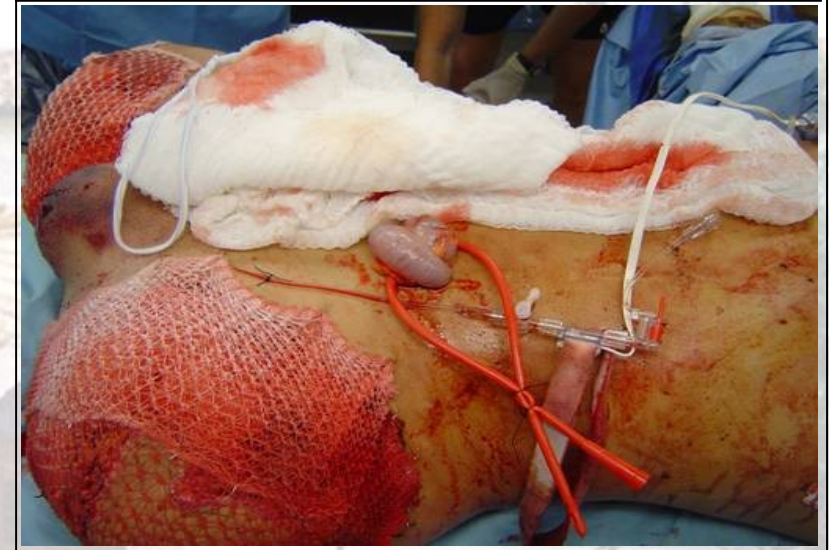




# Potential Visuals of Victims



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# Resolution - Post-Event



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**COPING**

**EVENT**

**IMPACT**

**PLUS**

**PRECRISIS**

**SAME**

**DEMOBILIZATION**

**CRISIS**

**DEFUSING**

**MINUS**

**DEBRIEFING**

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# Demobilization



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- Usually conducted at the scene/near the scene by peer members known by personnel
- At a break or end of shift
- 10 to 20 minutes
- Not a formal session
- Not a place to discuss feelings



# Demobilization Goals



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- Provide information about critical incident stress to first responders
- Evaluate the functional status of personnel prior to returning to duty
- Provide references and contacts to personnel for later use
- Act as informational support to command element
- Get coping mechanism in place so personnel can go back to work





# Defusing



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- Usually conducted at the conclusion of the event at some meeting facility away from the scene by a CISM team
- Personnel are out of service (off shift)
- 20-60 minutes, 6-8 people in group
- Primarily educational in nature
- More formal than demobilization – first line of critical incident response
- Not a critique of ops
- No note taking or recordings



# Defusing Goals



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- Lessen the impact of the event
- Assist in speeding up recovery process
- Evaluate need for a formal debriefing or other intervention services
- Provide information to aid a person or team to return to their full function or baseline
- Help reduce symptoms/reactions by being aware of abnormal responses to normal feelings
- Assurance that feelings are normal to abnormal circumstances





# Debriefing



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- Structured group meetings facilitated by CISM team and conducted after traumatic event or events to discuss thoughts/emotions
- Formal session, but not therapy; secure location
- 24-78 hours after event's conclusion
- Session is 1-3 hours – no interruptions
- 4-20 personnel in group
- 7-step process (Introduction, fact, thought, reaction, symptom, teaching, re-entry)
- No observers, no notes, keep confidential



# Debriefing Goals



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- Lessen impact of the event and assist in speeding up recovery process
- Forum to discuss thoughts, feelings, and physical responses to traumatic event
- Reduce fallacy of uniqueness or abnormality – everyone is in this together and have similar feelings
- Provide structure for personnel to vent, receive information, clarify, and reassure





# Summary



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# You Never Know...



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